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(54) **SYSTEM FOR DRIVING SPHERICAL WHEEL**

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B60L 9/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **701/22; 701/41**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 701/22, 41
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Disclosed is a system for driving a spherical wheel that includes a rotating sphere having a plurality of magnetic modules and a fixed body. The fixed body has coil modules that generate a magnetic field by current and partially enclose the rotating sphere so that a portion of the rotating sphere is exposed. A support wheel disposed between the rotating sphere and the fixed body is configured to maintain a substantially constant distance between the rotating sphere and the fixed body and rotatably support the rotating sphere. A sensor provided in at least one of the rotating sphere and the fixed body is configured to measure a rotational speed and a position of the rotating sphere, and a control device is configured to receive driving signals, the rotational velocity and the position measured by the sensor and to transmit a control signal supplying a current to the coil module.

6 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets

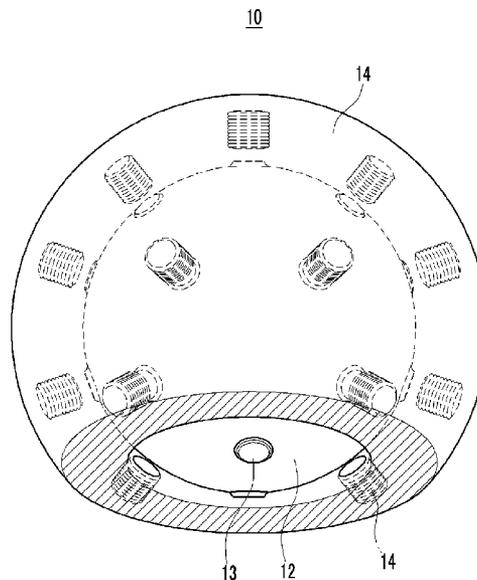
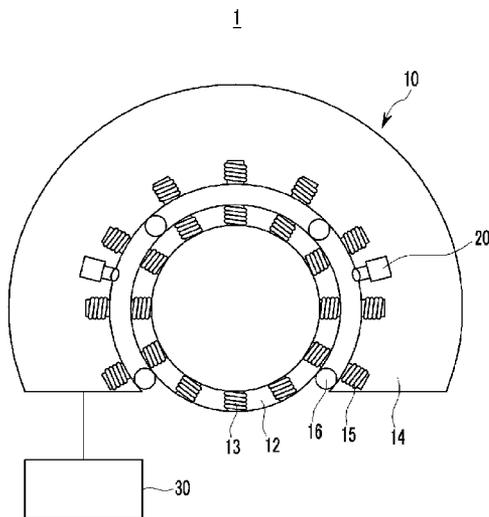


FIG. 1

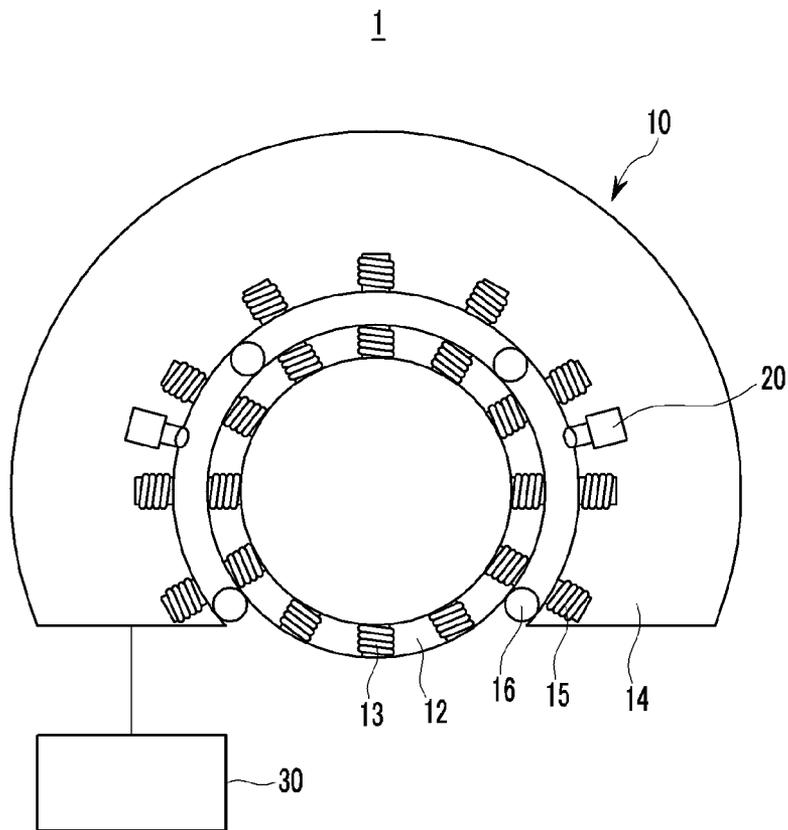


FIG. 2

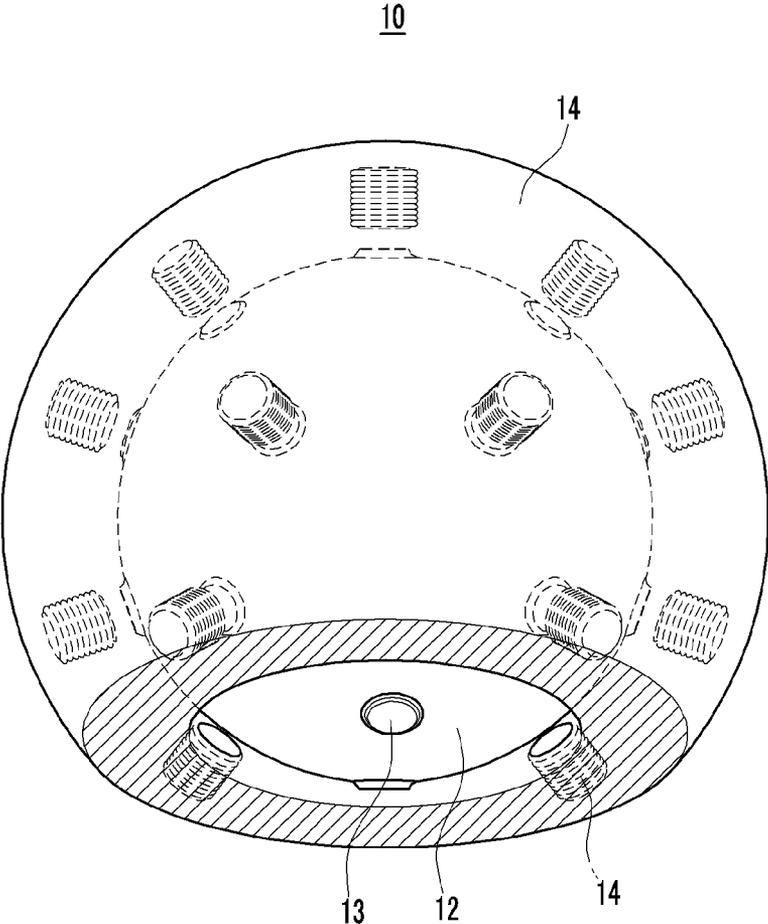


FIG. 4

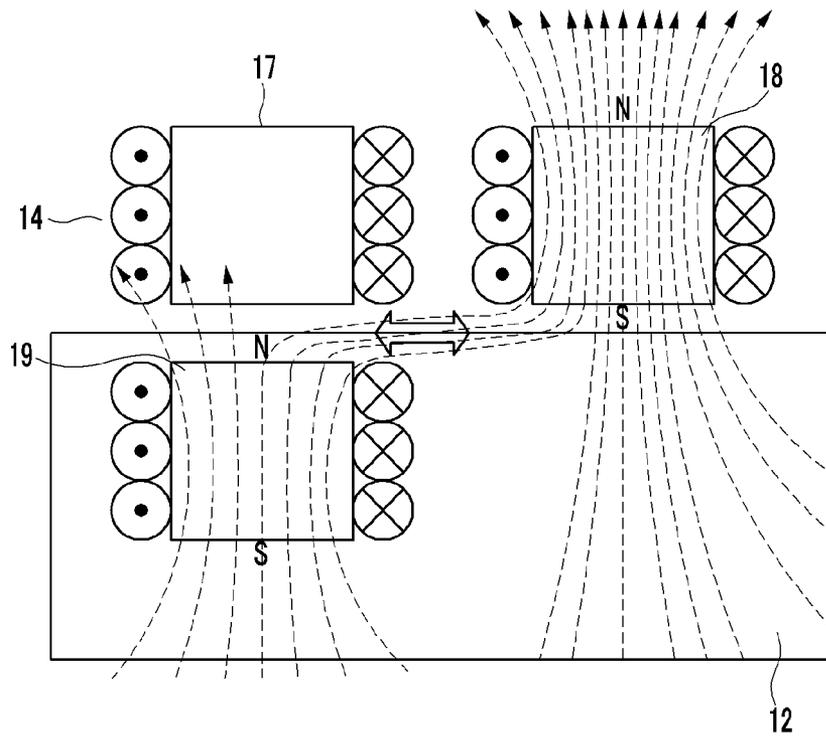


FIG. 5

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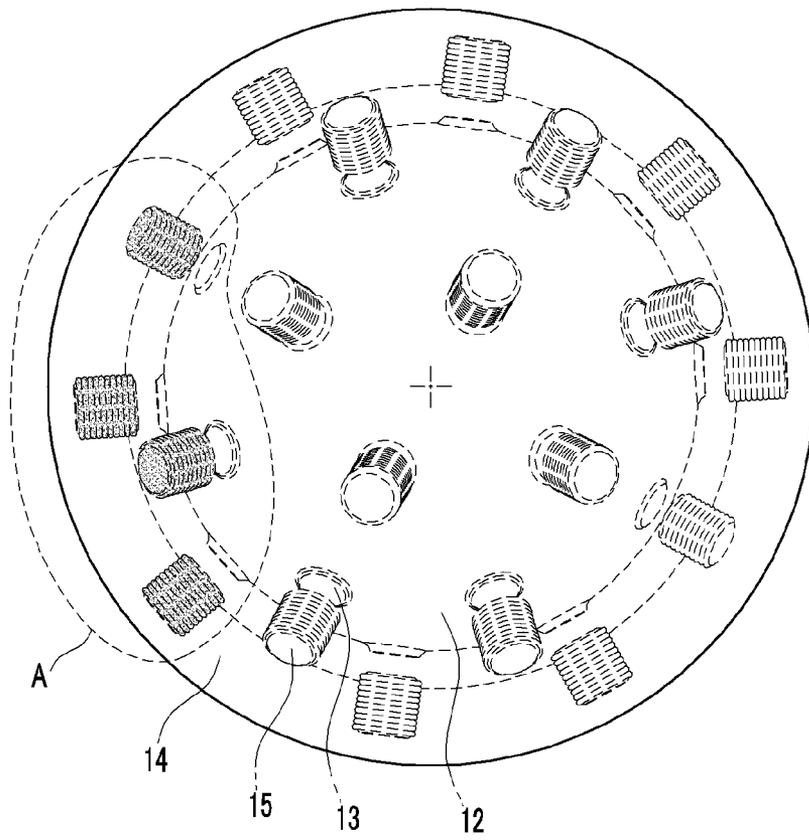


FIG. 6

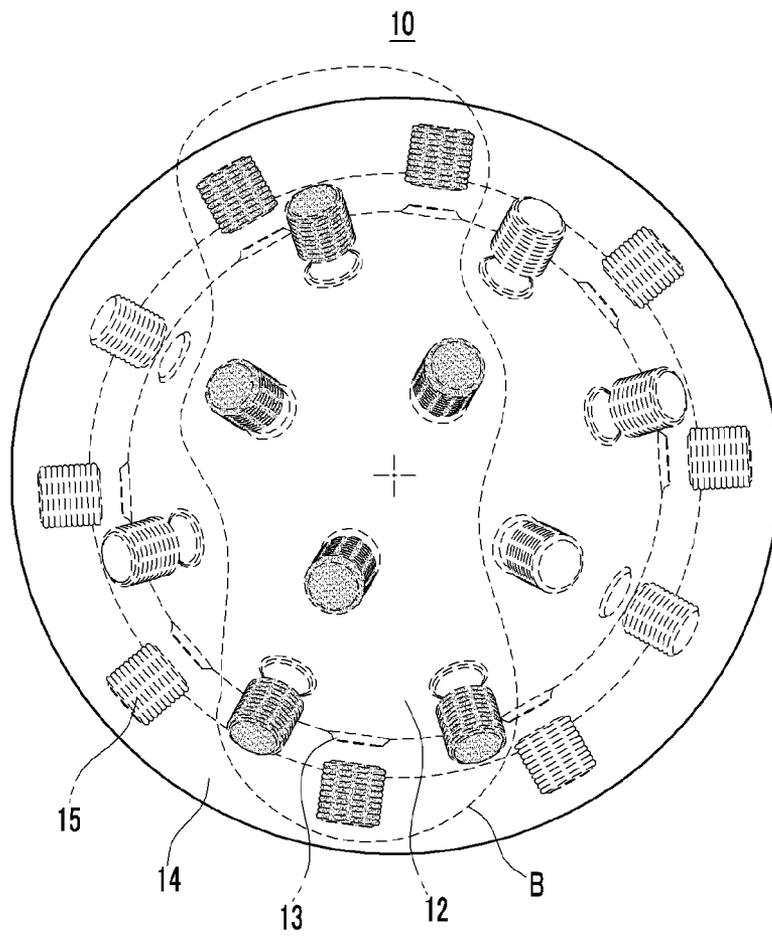
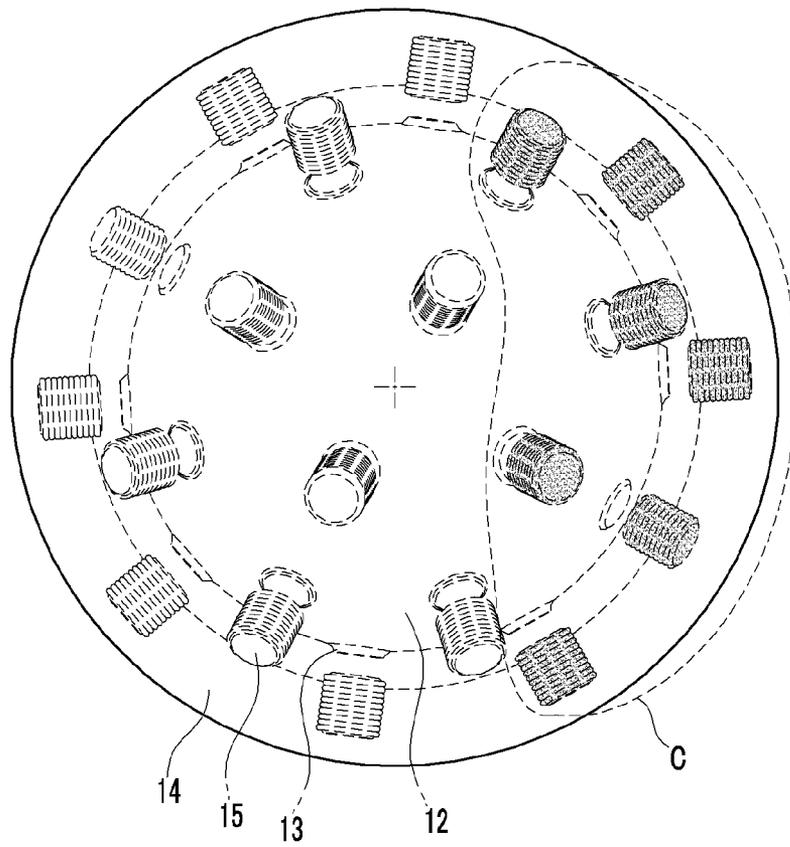


FIG. 7

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SYSTEM FOR DRIVING SPHERICAL WHEELCROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATION

This application claims priority to and the benefit of Korean Patent Application No. 10-2011-0131193 filed in the Korean Intellectual Property Office on Dec. 8, 2011, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a system for driving a spherical wheel, and more particularly to a system for driving a spherical wheel that moves a spherical wheel in all directions and is directly driven.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Recently, an in-wheel motor where a wheel is directly connected with a motor so as to drive a wheel directly has become most noticeable. However, the in-wheel motor as well as a conventional wheel driving type has one degree of freedom (DOF). Accordingly, the in-wheel motor cannot move a vehicle in all directions.

To solve such a problem, a spherical linkage or spherical wheel is applied to a wheel of the vehicle. However, a vehicle or driving apparatus using a spherical linkage or a spherical wheel (e.g., U.S. Pat. No. 4,785,899 and U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002-0153205) is hard to control or to achieve three degrees of freedom movement. Further, it is disclosed that the spherical wheel is driven by a magnetic force generated by a magnet and a coil (e.g., Korea Patent Publication No. 10-2009-0093523 and U.S. Pat. No. 6,906,441), but it is challenging to set a constant position of the magnet because the wheel of the vehicle rotates in any direction.

The above information disclosed in this Background section is only for enhancement of understanding of the background of the invention and therefore it can contain information that does not form the prior art that is already known in this country to a person of ordinary skill in the art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention has been made in an effort to provide a system for driving a spherical wheel having advantages of efficiently moving a vehicle in all directions depending on a direction set by a user.

A system for driving a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention can include: a rotating sphere having a plurality of magnetic modules; a fixed body having a plurality of coil modules adapted and configured to generate a magnetic field by current and partially enclosing the rotating sphere such that a portion of the rotating sphere is exposed; a support wheel disposed between the rotating sphere and the fixed body, the support wheel adapted and configured to (i) maintain a substantially constant distance between the rotating sphere and the fixed body and (ii) rotatably supporting the rotating sphere; a sensor provided in at least one of the rotating sphere and the fixed body, the sensor adapted and configured to measure a rotational speed and a position of the rotating sphere; and a control device adapted and configured to receive driving signals and the rotational velocity and the position measured by the sensor and to transmit a control signal supplying a current to the coil module.

The magnetic module can be a coil.

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The magnetic modules can be positioned in a circumferential direction of the rotating sphere at an even distance, and coil modules can be positioned in a circumferential direction of the rotating sphere so as to correspond to the magnetic modules.

The magnetic module can be inserted in the rotating sphere and be disposed close to an exterior circumference of the rotating sphere.

Each coil module can be inserted in the fixed body and disposed close to an interior circumference of the fixed body.

The control device can divide the coil modules into several parts according to the rotating direction of the rotating sphere rotated by the driving signals and sequentially supply current to each part of the coil modules.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a system for driving a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 and FIG. 4 are schematic diagrams for showing operation of a system for driving a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 5 to FIG. 7 are schematic diagrams for showing a movement of a magnetic field and a direction of a current applied to a coil module of a fixed body to a driving direction of a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

The following list of reference characters is provided for the reader's convenience:

1: system for driving spherical wheel	
10: spherical wheel	
12: rotating sphere	13: magnetic module
14: fixed body	15: coil module
16: support wheel	
20: sensor	
30: control device	

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE
EMBODIMENTS

Exemplary embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings so as to be easily practiced by a person skilled in the art.

Such exemplary embodiments are exemplary embodiments according to the present invention. Since a person skilled in the art can realize the present invention in various forms, it is to be understood that the scope of the present invention is not limited to exemplary embodiments which will be hereinafter described.

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a system for driving a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, and FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

A system 1 for driving a spherical wheel is adapted to change a magnetic field so as to move a vehicle in all directions and drive spherical wheels independently. Referring to FIG. 1 and FIG. 2, the system 1 for driving the spherical wheel includes the spherical wheel 10, a sensor 20, and a control device 30.

The spherical wheel **10** has three rotational degrees of freedom so as to move in all directions. The spherical wheel **10** includes a rotating sphere **12**, a fixed body **14**, and one or more support wheels **16**.

The rotating sphere **12** rotates in a state of contacting a bottom surface and includes a plurality of magnetic modules **13** affected by a magnetic field. The rotating sphere **12** can be provided in various types. According to an exemplary embodiment, the rotating sphere **12** can be a hollow sphere.

The plurality of magnetic modules **13** are inserted in the rotating sphere **12** and disposed close to an exterior circumference of the rotating sphere **12**. Also, the magnetic modules **13** are provided in a radial direction of the rotating sphere **12** and are positioned circumferentially at an even distance. According to an exemplary embodiment, a polygon formed by connecting all the plurality of magnetic modules **13** can be a dodecahedron or an icosahedron. As shown in the drawings, the magnetic module **13** is affected by a magnetic field generated by a coil module **15** of a fixed body **14**. According to an exemplary embodiment, the magnetic module **13** can be, but is not limited to, a coil. However, the magnetic module **13** can be a metal block. Also, the exterior circumference of the rotating sphere **12** can be a metal surface. The rotating sphere **12** can be driven by electromagnetic induction generated by a change of the magnetic field in the coil module **15** of the fixed body **14**.

The fixed body **14** partially encloses the rotating sphere **12** such that a portion of the rotating sphere **12** is exposed. The fixed body **14** includes a plurality of coil modules **15** that generates a magnetic field by a current. The fixed body **14** can be provided in various configurations according to an object coupled with the sphere wheel. However, the fixed body **14** should have an interior circumference that is substantially complimentary to the exterior circumference of the rotating sphere **12**.

The plurality of coil modules **15** are inserted in the fixed body **14** and disposed close to the interior circumference of the fixed body **14**. Further, each of the coil modules **15** corresponds to one of the plurality of magnetic modules **13**. In further detail, the magnetic modules **13** on the portion of the rotating sphere within the fixed body **14** and the coil modules **15** corresponding to each other are matched one to one. As described above, the magnetic modules **13** are positioned at the rotating sphere **12** circumferentially at an even distance, and the coil modules **15** are positioned in a circumferential direction of the rotating sphere **12** so as to correspond to the magnetic module **13**. However, the coil module **15** cannot be provided at an end portion of the fixed body **14**, that is, the exposed portion of the rotating sphere **12**. Therefore, the number of magnetic modules **13** can be more than that of the coil modules **15**.

The coil module **15** generates a magnetic field using a current supplied from a current supply apparatus (not shown).

The support wheel **16** is disposed between the rotating sphere and the fixed body so as to keep a constant distance between the rotating sphere **12** and the fixed body **14**. Particularly, the support wheels **16** rotatably support the rotating sphere **12**. The plurality of support wheels **16** are provided in various types. According to an exemplary embodiment, the support wheel **16** can be a ball caster, a ball bearing, or an omnidirectional wheel.

The sensor **20** is provided in at least one of the rotating sphere **12** and the fixed body **14**, and measures a rotational speed and a position of the rotating sphere **12**. According to an exemplary embodiment, the sensor **20**, as shown in FIG. 2, is provided close to the interior circumference of the fixed body **14**. The rotational speed of the rotating sphere **12** can be

measured using an optic sensor or a magnetic sensor. Also, the position of the rotating sphere **12** can be calculated using an encoder.

The control device **30** is adapted to supply the current to the coil module **15**. In further detail, the control device **30** receives driving signals set by a user and the rotational speed and the position measured by the sensor **20**, and transmits a control signal supplying a current to the coil module. The driving signals include a movement of the spherical wheel, that is, direction and speed of the spherical wheel.

Particularly, the control device **30** is adapted to divide the coil modules **15** into several parts according to the rotating direction of the rotating sphere **12** rotated by the driving signals, and to supply a current to each part of the coil modules **15** sequentially.

Operation of the spherical wheel will hereinafter be described in detail.

FIG. 3 and FIG. 4 are schematic diagrams for showing operation of a system for driving a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

As shown in FIG. 3 and FIG. 4, an exemplary embodiment where the magnetic module **13** of the rotating sphere **12** is the coil will be described. In FIG. 3 and FIG. 4, a dotted line represents a magnetic field and a bold arrow represents a magnetic force, that is, mutual attraction of the magnetic field.

When the control device **30** generates the magnetic field at the coil modules **15**, the control device **30** divides the coil modules **15** into first coil modules **17** generating the magnetic field firstly and second coil modules **18** generating the magnetic field secondly depending on a rotational direction of the rotating sphere **12**, and supplies the current sequentially to the first coil modules **17** and the second coil modules **18**. The first coil module **17** and the second coil module **18** are disposed close to each other. Further, the coil **19** and the magnetic module **13** of the rotating sphere **12** are disposed corresponding to the first coil module **17**.

If the current is supplied to the first coil module **17**, the magnetic field generated in the first coil module **17** passes the coil **19** of the rotating sphere **12**. After that, if the current having been supplied to the first coil module **17** is supplied to the second coil module **18**, the magnetic field is generated in the second coil module **18**. At this time, a current hindering a change of the magnetic field in the fixed body **14** is induced in the coil **19** of the rotating sphere **12**. Accordingly, a magnetic field is generated in the coil **19** of the rotating sphere **12**.

Therefore, a mutual attraction is generated between the magnetic field generated in the coil **19** of the rotating sphere **12** and the magnetic field generated in the second coil module **18**. Accordingly, the movable rotating sphere **12** moves toward the second coil module **18**.

Operation of the system **1** for driving the spherical wheel described above will now be described in detail.

FIG. 5 to FIG. 7 are schematic diagrams for showing a movement of a magnetic field and a direction of a current applied to a coil module of a fixed body to a driving embodiment of a spherical wheel according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. The 'A' portion, 'B' portion, and 'C' portion in FIG. 5 to FIG. 7 are portions in the coil module **15** to which the current is supplied.

If a user sets a driving direction, the control device **30** transmits the control signal supplying the current to the coil module **15** depending on the driving signals. At this time, the control device **30** transmits the control signals taking into account the rotational speed and the position of the rotating sphere **12** received from the sensor **20**.

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The control device **30** divides the coil modules **15** into several parts according to the set rotating direction of the rotating sphere **12** and supplies the current to each part of the coil modules **15** sequentially.

According to an exemplary embodiment, it is shown in FIG. **5** to FIG. **7** that the spherical wheel is set to rotate from the left to the right.

The control device **30** divides the coil modules **15** of the fixed body **14** into several parts according to the set rotating direction of the spherical wheel. Therefore, after the current is supplied to the coil modules **15** disposed at the left, the current is supplied to the coil modules **15** disposed at the center and at the right, sequentially. That is, the current is supplied to the coil modules **15** of the 'A' portion in FIG. **5**, the coil modules **15** of the 'B' portion in FIG. **6**, and the coil modules **15** of the 'C' portion in FIG. **7**, sequentially. Therefore, if the magnetic field changing from the left to the right is generated in the coil modules **15**, a magnetic field is generated in the magnetic modules **13** corresponding to the coil modules **15** disposed at the left. Therefore, the rotating sphere **12** rotates by the mutual attraction between the magnetic field of the coil module **15** and the magnetic field of the magnetic module **13**.

According to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, the spherical wheel can efficiently move in all directions depending on a direction set by a user.

While this invention has been described in connection with what is presently considered to be practical exemplary embodiments, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments, but, on the contrary, is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for driving a spherical wheel, comprising:
a rotating sphere having a plurality of magnetic modules;

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a fixed body having a plurality of coil modules adapted and configured to generate a magnetic field by current and partially enclosing the rotating sphere such that a portion of the rotating sphere is exposed;

a support wheel disposed between the rotating sphere and the fixed body, the support wheel adapted and configured to (i) maintain a substantially constant distance between the rotating sphere and the fixed body and (ii) rotatably support the rotating sphere;

a sensor provided in at least one of the rotating sphere and the fixed body, the sensor adapted and configured to measure a rotational speed and a position of the rotating sphere; and

a control device adapted and configured to receive driving signals and the rotational velocity and the position measured by the sensor and to transmit a control signal supplying a current to the coil module.

2. The system of claim **1**, wherein the magnetic module is a coil.

3. The system of claim **2**, wherein the control device divides the coil modules into several parts according to the rotating direction of the rotating sphere rotated by the driving signals, and sequentially supplies current to each part of the coil modules.

4. The system of claim **1**, wherein the magnetic modules are positioned in a circumferential direction of the rotating sphere at an even distance, and

coil modules are positioned in a circumferential direction of the rotating sphere so as to correspond to the magnetic modules.

5. The system of claim **1**, wherein the magnetic module is inserted in the rotating sphere and is disposed close to an exterior circumference of the rotating sphere.

6. The system of claim **1**, wherein the coil module is inserted in the fixed body and is disposed close to an interior circumference of the fixed body.

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